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Title: The barriers in the search for teacher authority

Author: Sabina Koczoń-Zurek

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The barriers in the search for teacher authority

In spite of civilizational changes, the role of the teacher in the educational process still seems essential. His or her figure is particularly important in the process of upbringing, as nothing can replace personal contact with another human being. The power of the influence of a teacher-counselor depends upon a variety of factors, individual or independent of his or her personality. They shape the image of the teacher and his or her authority. Is the teacher an authority to pupils and if so, of what kind? This question has been at the center of pedagogical reflection over the centuries. Over the years, we have witnessed a decline of the authority of the teacher in the eyes of the pupil and of society.

The problem of the teacher's authority still seems open and awakens interest, particularly in the age of crisis, not only economical but also socio-moral. For many years, it has been the subject of interest, also from the sociological perspective (see Kosmala, 1999, pp. 24–69). It seems that a reflection on that subject is necessary on the part of the students of pedagogy, in order to improve the image of a teacher in the eyes of students and society, which also seems necessary for the professional motivation of future teachers. A certain mechanism can be observed here — the authority of a teacher raises his or her professional self-esteem, and self-acceptance connected with the appreciation of one's value, which is a strong motivational factor for work (Koczoń-Zurek, 1996, pp. 53–63). The presented relationships demonstrate the significance of the teacher's authority in his or her professional experience. It seems particularly important for adolescents, due to the specificity of development during that period (Obuchowska, 2000, pp. 163–196), as well as provoking a crisis of authority. It is obvious that it is easier to become an authority for primary school students, especially in the first three grades, than for the higher levels of education, especially middle and high schools. This is most certainly due to the specificity of the child's development at an early age. It appears, however, that it is the primary school teachers that are

most prepared for work, in terms of pedagogical-psychological competence. Their knowledge and professional skills allow them to work more effectively and to retain their authority, despite the general crisis in that field. It remains only to appeal to an increase in the number of psychological and pedagogical subjects at university teaching courses. Hope is instilled by the fact that some departments at pedagogical universities are already moving in that direction. Not only is the teacher's authority at stake here, but also the quality of his or her work. High social assessment, as well as the teacher's self-assessment in that area can lead towards the change in teachers' authority. Gazing optimistically towards the future of education (which may sometimes be difficult), young people will perhaps perceive their teachers as "mentors," professionals, ideals to be emulated and "friends" that can be counted on. This is particularly important also in the crisis of the family, which does not always correctly fulfill its parental functions and support its children. This is an ideal created in literature for centuries, yet still current.

Can the teacher be an authority for young people? What weakens the image of a contemporary teacher? Let us inspect this question first in the context of the tasks that he or she manages and the professional roles that he or she adapts, through a terminological explanation of the concept of authority and the search for factors that may weaken it.

Towards the teacher's roles and tasks

When the student crosses the school's threshold, he or she encounters upon his or her path a person who exerts influence over this student's personality, overall development, not only intellectual but also moral, although the teacher's roles and tasks change with every educational level. Certain values in relation to the teacher's role have remained constant for years. It seems that a good teacher, just like a parent, takes care of his or her students, educates and brings up (praises or negates the student's behavior, explains, demonstrates, inspires, etc.). It is important to remember that a teacher does not only introduce the students to the world of knowledge, but also explains good and evil, not only from the perspective of the teaching curriculum but also by importing a certain hierarchy of values. The teacher is an authority on ethical matters. Hence it is important that the profession is undertaken by people whose moral value system allows them to shape a young person in a positive manner. Theory and practice demonstrate that the latter stages of education decrease the importance of the teacher in relation to shaping the student's personality. Along with maturing, other authorities begin to

play an important role. It is rare for the teacher to be an authority in the middle and high schools. This is perhaps due not only to the development in the age of adolescence but also to the lack of necessary competencies in the psychological skills of the teacher.

Let us look closer at the figure of the teacher from the perspective of the pedeutological orientation on personality. Alicja Anna Kotusiewicz indicates that "the teacher is most of all a *becoming* person set against another *becoming* person. He or she is a movement from himself or herself towards others and beyond himself or herself in striving towards a renewal of the self and supporting others with this renewal" (Kotusiewicz, 1997, p. 32). The portrayed dynamics suggests the need for a ceaseless reflection of the teacher over himself or herself. His or her work is compared with "art," thus it is rendered as work that is investigative, structuring, one which endows the reality with a human meaning, a way of liberation, the self-creation of a human being and the co-creation of the world, "a covenant of people" participating in the educational relation. The teacher is thus a carrier of values, a person who fulfills their vocation. The teacher is an expert and a professional who conveys knowledge from his or her academic field, and thanks to frequent contacts with students he or she becomes their close "friend" (cf. Kotusiewicz, 1997, pp. 31–33).

A series of demands is placed on the figure of a teacher, his or her social roles and functions are delineated. According to Piotr Sztompka, a social role is "a collection of rights and responsibilities that apply to anyone who occupies a given social position, regardless of one's features of personality" (Sztompka, 2002, p. 81). Thus the definition of a social role already implies that the teacher must fulfill certain obligations due to the social functions that he or she performs. The definition of a social role suggests that the teacher's work not only consists of completing the didactic, educational, and upbringing tasks.

The social role of the teacher can be regarded as a link conjoining personality, culture, and social structure. Anna Krajewska highlights the fact that social roles are connected with particular responsibilities. The teacher is subject to social assessment, including sanctions for bad performance in the fulfillment of social duties (cf. Krajewska, 1995, pp. 63–64). The author distinguishes three types of social roles of the teacher in relation to school responsibilities: "essential," "peripheral," and "external." The first one concerns the relationships with the students, the teaching staff, the school headmasters and the students' parents. The second category — "peripheral" — is connected with the social relationship with students and their legal guardians, other teachers, and school employees. The external roles concern the teacher's activities outside of the school's reality and professional experience (pp. 64–65). Jean D. Grambs distinguishes the roles "of a teacher as a manager of the didactic process, social functions of education,

thus the teacher playing the role of an intermediary of culture, who ensures cultural continuity" (p. 66). Another categorization distinguishes between inter-school and extra-school roles. Inter-school roles concern the teacher in the role of: an organizer and manager of extracurricular activities, an educational guardian of the class, a person who studies and obtains additional education, and who also experiments" (p. 73). In terms of the extra-school roles, the teacher is perceived as an organizer of the cooperation between school and student's home and as a social activist. This role also stresses the teacher's participation in collective activities that aim for an achievement of various goals undertaken by social, educational, and cultural institutions (cf. Krajewska, 1995, pp. 73–74). The aforementioned examples of the categorization of the teacher's role demonstrate that his or her social activities exceed the space of the school. As such, the teacher is constantly subject to social assessment. Once again, this highlights the necessity of the importance of candidate selection for that profession. Future teachers must be aware of the responsibilities that lie before them. It seems that the candidates for the teaching profession narrow down the range of their duties to didactic ones.

Every candidate for the profession ought to be aware of the tasks that lie ahead. This is broadly accounted for in pedagogical literature and, naturally, pedeutology itself. It seems worthwhile to turn our attention to selected treatments of teacher's tasks, which do not merely consist of teaching and the conveying of knowledge. The formative aspect of the teacher's work is visible in, among others, the ideas of Stefan Wołoszyn. Referring to the concepts of Jan Legowicz, the author stresses that the teacher should above all help to form a human being. He or she should see his or her pupil as a human being, with all its human rights. It is this *humanum* that constitutes the necessary part of the teacher's personality. Referring to the formative ideas of an outstanding pedagogue Janusz Korczak, he mentions the "spiritual culture" of the educator, which is based on forgiveness and perceiving these positive features in the personality of the pupil. This is, as he stated, "the highest humanist value." Such an attitude cannot be shaped by just any person. This can only be done by a person with a personality for whom value resides in upbringing, helping another human being, honest work, a morally mature person who is aware of their responsibility towards others. This is an ideal of a teacher that is still current. Of further importance seems to be the shaping of one's own vision of "being" a teacher and striving towards its realization. Thus, creative competencies of a teacher seem necessary. To do so, one needs however, to feel the vocation for the teacher's work, to "want" to work with young people, to teach, to educate. Anyway, such are the expectations of youth towards teachers and educators. This seems to be the departure point for self-improvement. Wołoszyn also stressed that it is the young people who are the most quick to notice and appreciate their

teacher's behavior, his or her goals and his or her life values (Wołoszyn, 1994, pp. 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 26). Research also highlights how important in the teacher's personality it is for them to enjoy their work, to want to work with young people. This is almost banal, but young people sometimes notice that their teachers lack such elementary qualities and expect them from their teacher-educator.

The teacher is responsible for performing functions that influence the school's rank. These include: "educational, upbringing, guardian, environmental, life-orienting, social, and research" (Banach, 2004, p. 436). Czesław Banach stresses that "the teacher constitutes the value, the aim and the tool of the educational policy" (p. 549). It seems that such a perspective on tasks may hold a negative value — the necessity of submitting to politics, external pressure, yet it indicates that the teacher's work is dependent on socio-political factors, as well as economic. What seems positive is the stressing of the fact that the teacher's work is based on shaping the future and interpersonal relations, and that the teacher's task at school is serving the students in a way so as to shape his or her intellectual and moral spheres (pp. 549–550).

It is worth remembering that the teacher's tasks are specifically described by legislative acts in Poland, particularly the Teacher's Charter. According to this act, the teacher is obliged to "honestly perform tasks connected with the position that he or she is awarded and the school's fundamental functions: didactic, upbringing, and guardian; support every student in his or her development and strive towards the fullness of his or her own personal development. The teacher is obliged to educate and raise the youth in the spirit of love for the homeland, the respect for the Constitution of the Polish Republic, in the atmosphere of the freedom of conscience and respect for every human being; to ensure the pupil's development of moral and citizen values, according to the ideas of democracy, peace, and friendship between people of all nations, races, and worldviews (art. 6) (Koczoń-Zurek, 2008b, p. 150). It thus seems that the legal designation of the teacher's roles only highlights the importance of his or her personality, values, and moral attitude towards his professional duties.

It seems that the teacher as a governmental official, protected by the Polish legal codex, ought to swear fealty to these tasks. The tasks should be visible to the teacher (for instance hung in the teacher's common room), just as an ethical code, created, for example, by the teacher himself or herself before the undertaking of professional duties, to remind him or her of the necessity of honest work. The tasks contained in the Teacher's Charter imply that not every person can become a teacher. They suggest that every teacher should care for his or her students, organize interesting classes, and tailor the didactic process to individual needs. The teacher should protect the

spirit of patriotism and the fulfillment of values that characterize an honest citizen and an exemplary cohabitant of Earth. The care of the development of interests, talents, and aspirations of students is also important (cf. Gaś, 2001, p. 12). These are just examples of tasks, which perhaps particularly move mind and heart, because for certain the personal experience of the majority of our community demonstrates that, unfortunately, the teacher cannot always live up to these expectations. As we know, the reality is sometimes quite removed from theory. To become an authority, one must perform one's tasks honestly, particularly since the educating teacher becomes an example. If he or she wants to teach children an honest approach to their duties, he himself/she herself must perform them exemplarily. If teachers want to teach respect towards people, towards the homeland, etc., they should represent such an attitude. The same goes for every educational value. All of this seems self-evident, yet why are so many teachers not living up to these tasks?

The exemplification of chosen social roles, tasks, and functions of the teacher demonstrates that the teacher can be an extremely important person in the life of every student. In his or her everyday work, he or she touches (reinforcing or damaging) the personality of a young person. To live up to the designated tasks, he must sustain his activity through formal education and other means, in order to complement his or her knowledge and professional skills. However, in order to do so, they must possess personality traits appropriate for the teacher's profession, and must want to work in that profession. And once again we arrive at the repeating motif — the selection of candidates for the teacher's profession.

References to the understanding of authority

While searching for factors that weaken the teacher's authority, it seems appropriate to take a closer look at the understanding of that concept. It originates from the Latin *auctoritas* (a council of experienced men) (Jazukiewicz, 2003, p. 154). Henryk Rowid provides an interpretation of the concept which is not a particularly modern one: "a certain inherent quality present in a person or an institution, thanks to which other people, institutions or social groups become subordinated, in a more or less willing way" (1957, p. 257). Through this approach, authority may initially be perceived quite negatively, due to the element of "subordination." The author indicates, however, the existence of free will, thus, theoretically, the possibility of choice of the authority. From an encyclopedic perspective, authority means "respect, prestige of people, groups and institutions, based on the values of

a given society; also people, institutions, etc. who enjoy respect in a given discipline; usually distinguished authorities are of law, competence, personality, morality and religion" (*Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna*, PWN, p. 292). Thus, authority means values held in high esteem by the society, which is personalized by certain individuals (cf. Kosmala, 1999, pp. 7–8). The authority of a teacher expresses "respect and trust for the teacher as an academic expert, a counselor, a guide in difficulties, a source of pedagogical influence; the situation of perceiving the teacher as a personality role-model and the student's identification with him or her; the relationship of a natural and voluntary submission to his or her authority; the authority of the teachers depends upon the ability to transform their relationships with the student towards autonomy in the atmosphere of dialogue and mutual searching" (Jazukiewicz, 2003, p. 254).

The understanding of the teacher's authority underlines his or her didactic influence. The authority shapes: "the self-reliance and initiative of the pupils, enables self-education and self-development, and, as such, ensures satisfaction and personal happiness" (p. 258). It strives towards the pupil's own self-understanding, which allows for later decisions about one's own future. It is a way of influencing the pupil, while retaining his freedom (p. 258). This mode of understanding authority can be regarded in two ways. It seems that the term "influence" objectifies the pupil too much. Yet on the other hand, the respect for the pupil is also noted, the possibility of choosing the role-model.

The authority of the teacher is created by his or her behavior, which allows the teacher to become important for and trusted by the student, without the employment of negative reinforcement. Thanks to his or her authority, the teacher can mold the pupil's personality. The authority is connected with the acknowledgement and the possibilities of using the method of modeling — that is, patterning the pupil upon the teacher. The authority of the teacher thus assists the process of upbringing. Through such actions, it acquires importance in the didactic process.

For young people, the role-models are those who educate children on a daily basis, that is, parents, guardians, teachers. As they develop, particularly at the time of adolescence, this becomes increasingly more difficult. Not every teacher is or can be an authority. According to the theories of need hierarchy, everybody wants to be important to another person. To be able to "become" an authority for the younger generation, one must display behavior appreciated by and attractive to young people. One can assume that to become an authority one must possess a quality that awakens admiration, respect, and motivation to cultivate such a quality within oneself. Yet, according to Lech Witkowski, "usually, quite mistakenly as it seems, the authority of the teacher is associated with uniqueness or trust, or knowledge, or with

providing a role-model to follow" (2009, p. 341). This statement deserves consideration. It seems obvious that young people identify with authorities and want to become like them. An authority can change attitudes and behaviors, not only of young people. The opinion and judgment of a person who is an authority can acquire the rank of an expert, who is gladly listened to (Stach, 1998, pp. 27–28). For some, the authorities are people from the most immediate environment, parents, siblings. Others search for an ideal in public figures, characterized by wisdom of life experience, spiritual wealth, religious conduct, or in people "media personalities," who frequently behave in a controversial manner. Sometimes, a person does not have a choice in an authority, as it is simply imposed.

One should highlight the fact that the authority is also connected with certain dangers. Most people blindly believe the authority, without an objective judgment of whatever is being imposed. This is an unfavorable dependence of the person submitting to the authority, as it leads to intellectual laziness. Mindless execution of orders dulls the mind and contributes to creating a psychological dependence of a pupil towards his or her authority. In such a situation, the teacher can use his or her rank and manipulate the pupil (Stach, p. 28). This is why the teacher's personality is important, as well as thinking about upbringing in the context of the pupil's development.

An authority cannot exist independently. A contact of at a minimum two people is necessary. Where modeling occurs, of one person's attitudes and value hierarchies on the other, the authority is born (Arabczyk, 2008, p. 39). Maria Żebrowska stresses that "the authority is the result of a one or two-sided interaction between two people, two groups or a person and a group, during whose course [...] one of the sides acquires the tendency of modeling its way of thinking [...]" (Badura, 1981, pp. 52–53). Bożena Marcińczyk also distinguishes two sides: the object and the subject of authority. The first one includes not only people (and their characteristics – the personalist approach), but also human products and their features. The subject in this case, is the person who assumes that authority. Here, the author also notices the occurring relationship – the interaction between the subject and the object, which is usually unequal. Sometimes the relationship may concern both sides, where both parties mutually influence each other, or just one person – a one-sided relationship, mutual or independent (Marcińczyk, 1991, p. 32–34). In such a relationship, a confrontation, a certain feeling of respect and admiration is born, which leads to an emergence of trust. The subject then yields to the object of its own authority. He or she is capable of obedience (cf. Kosmala, p. 9). The authority of a teacher rests on a two-sided relation between the teacher and the student. It must be mentioned that such a relation has to be positively charged in terms of emotions and must rely on mutual acceptance and an exchange of influence. Above all, it consists

of dialogue and searching (cf. Jazukiewicz, 2003, pp. 255–256). Such an approach underlines the fact that the authority does not enforce anything and respects the other's choices.

The concept of the authority is also connected with power, leadership, and influence. According to Marcińczyk, this is determined by the difference in peoples' attitudes. The power of a particular person may be imposed, thus it intensifies negative attitudes among people. It is important to remember that the authority that one acquires through education and experience may be identified with power, particularly official and "potential," which concerns occupying an important position and function. It seems important to stress that power can exist without authority, but authority cannot exist without power. It seems that authority constitutes the foundation of power. It can strengthen it as it makes its facilitation easier. It is fair to presume that the teacher as an authority has a greater possibility of fulfilling the designated goals. Marcińczyk has also analyzed authority and leadership, where authority can be a desired quality in a leader and may thus fulfill an important role in different groups of people. She has also analyzed authority and influence, in which case, those two aspects are conjoined (pp. 15–29). This affirms the thesis that authority is a quality desirable in a teacher. In a certain sense he or she is a "leader" of a group of children and possesses a certain formal "power" (giving bad grades, writing notes to parents, etc.), as well as an informal one (e.g. emotional rejection or acceptance of a pupil). Being an authority, the teacher possesses greater capability of supporting, or, unfortunately, hindering a young person's development.

The analyses conducted by Iwona Jazukiewicz have demonstrated that the teacher's authority which is built on strength and power will not shape the positive relationships between the teacher and the student. One based on servitude seems more desired, whose purpose will not be subjugation of a student, but his or her well-being and self-development. This may be termed real authority. The power in this case is constituted by performing such activities that serve the well-being of a student. The student chooses the authority and willingly submits to its influence. In this case, one cannot speak of oppression on the part of the teacher. Instead, a trust towards authority is born. One could say, such an authority combines power and responsibility for the fate of the student (cf. Jazukiewicz, pp. 254–255). It also underlines his or her positive influence upon the personality of the student.

Erich Fromm distinguishes a "to be" and "to have" authority. The first one concerns the features of the personality of a given individual that are particularly appreciated by society. The "to be" authority depends upon possessing qualities which are not necessarily appreciated by society, instead they concern the individual character of a person who accomplished his or her goals and achieved integrity. It is important for an individual to

possess and acquire appropriate qualities, thanks to which he or she can develop a rich personality. Here, one can also mention the “charismatic personality,” which, according to Kazimierz Obuchowski designated a person who performs certain functions meticulously and well, and thus successfully influences other people in the environment (cf. Marcińczyk, pp. 34–35). It seems that a teacher should be that kind of personality. And here, once again, the issue of candidate selection should be raised. Do future candidates for the teacher’s profession possess qualities particular to that kind of personality?

Different categorizations of authority are present in the literature of the subject and different kinds are distinguished. For instance, Emilia Badura distinguishes internal, external, intellectual, moral, liberating, and subjugating authority. Internal authority is based on a willing modeling of one’s own attitudes upon another person’s. The external one consists in the compulsion of submitting to a person whom one fears or respects. The authority may also be true or false. Intellectual authority is connected with experience and knowledge, a moral one with features of personality, a hierarchy of values, and a moral stance. A liberating authority concerns developing motivation, stimulating the pupil to achieve a given goal. The subjugating one is connected with — as Badura writes — “a lust for power” on the part of the person who constitutes the authority, and constant obedience to them (cf. Badura, pp. 44–46). The classifications presented demonstrate how varied the teacher’s authority may be. Treating the pupil as a subject suggests that the teacher should not be an external or a subjugating authority. Teachers who are an internal authority should be appreciated, provided they exist at all. To fulfill teaching goals, the teacher should be an intellectual authority. This places demands on the teacher’s knowledge, not only of his subject, but also a general one, concerning different fields and aspects of life. The moral authority seems particularly important in the completion of upbringing goals. This underlines the importance of personality, values, and attitudes of teachers in the process of selecting prospective candidates for the job, as well as their education. With regard to all educational goals, the teacher should be a liberating authority, which is expressed by his or her potential for developing motivation in a student. This is contained in the principles of teaching and upbringing, for instance in the capacity to interest pupils in the taught subject. Such are the expectations of young people with regard to the figure of the teacher.

The sources of authority are revealed by Thomas Gordon’s classification. It may be based on: experience (concerns people who are experts in a given academic discipline), function (concerns people who play an important and responsible role in a given social group), informal obligations (informal agreements followed by members of a particular social group) and advantage

and strength (an authoritarian authority who seeks obedience at all costs) (cf. Gordon, 1997, pp. 34–43). The specificity of the teacher's profession suggests that the authority may be based on different sources outlined by Gordon. The authoritarian authority is not recommended, yet it may be useful in resocializing work, particularly in its early stages.

Historically speaking, we can distinguish an integral authority, which characterized the ancient sages who exemplified wisdom and knowledge. Intellectual and moral authority were closely connected with each other. With time, integral authorities metamorphosed into partial ones, pertaining to people who were experts in one particular area of life (cf. Kotłowski, 1997, p. 36). This historical perspective on authority (intellect and wisdom together) still seems valid with regard to the teaching profession. It suggests that the teacher should be a moral authority, as well as an intellectual one. Once again, reflection seems necessary, whether that is taken into consideration in the process of candidate selection, education, and/or employment. One can hope that there exist such headmasters (people who employ teachers) for whom the values of a prospective teacher matter.

The understanding of the concept of authority presented above, its explanations, chosen classifications, and the problems connected with the possibility of influence, confirm that the teacher's authority is important for the didactic process. One can wonder when or how the teacher becomes or does not become an authority. The above analyses have already provided a general answer — of greatest importance is the appropriate selection of candidates for the profession. The literature on the subject naturally explains and describes the conditions that must be fulfilled for a personal authority to be created. Marcińczyk underlines the fact that two sides need to be created: the object, with particular qualities, and the subject, who notices, willingly acknowledges and appreciates certain characteristic and important qualities. The influence of values does not need to be fully conscious for the person affirming the qualities of a given object. Later, however, the subject ought to become fully aware of the qualities present in the object of authority and agree to their influence (cf. Marcińczyk, p. 38). Thus, it is not only the most wonderful personal qualities and values that allow the teacher to become an authority for young people. Moreover, it seems that it is difficult to become an authority for young people with negative social values.

The exemplification of the authority of the teacher, preceded by an analysis of the roles, functions and tasks of the teacher, takes us closer to the factors that weaken his influence. Some were already made apparent against the background of earlier analyses. Let us then take a closer look at the chosen conditions which lower the authority of a contemporary teacher.

Factors weakening the process of becoming an authority in the teaching profession

The views on the professional development of the teacher, and in particular the view of Kwaśnica, indicate that the teacher's development never ends, which has been demonstrated in the context of the changing roles and tasks of a contemporary teacher (cf. Koczoń-Zurek, 2006a, pp. 144–146). Similarly, the teacher's authority may change under the influence of various factors. Those factors either strengthen or weaken the teacher's authority, or "sustain" it at a certain level. A teacher's authority may be shaped by various factors, directly dependent upon the values of the students whom the teacher encounters in his or her professional career. There also exist factors which are socially or culturally conditioned. Henryka Kwiatkowska stresses that teachers relate their authority "only to the area of the school, or even the classroom. Teachers do not fully realize how dramatic the situation of the formative task in the contemporary world is" (Kwiatkowska, 2008, p. 145). The absence of this awareness may constitute a barrier for the professional authority of the teacher, which resides in his or her very own person. Perhaps, the teachers should be made aware of their importance in that field, and their ability to act through a conscientious fulfillment of social roles. The strengthening of the authority of the teaching profession could perhaps be a way towards achieving that.

Pedagogical theory suggests, as well as delineates situations which influence the decrease of the teacher's authority in the contemporary world. It seems that the general determinant of authority are socio-political changes, which transform the order of the world and interfere in human relationships. Psychological, pedagogical, and sociological sources highlight the fact that mass media has a negative influence on young people. The transmission of information which distorts reality, the manipulation of the values and feelings of a young person, disturbs his or her personal reflection and the process of "becoming human."

The mass media is an external factor that greatly influences various spheres of social life. Not only do they reflect the attitude of the society towards teachers, but above all, they shape the perception of the teacher in the eyes of society, presenting his or her image as a didactic, formative social worker.

Authorities are shaped by television and the Internet. They frequently create "heroes" out of colorful, "empty" figures, devoid of values. Frequently the television screen promotes incidental people who do not possess any values that could inspire young people. The sensitivity of a young person is also often dimmed by movies and games. All of the above exerts a nega-

tive influence over a young receiver, creating a deformed and destructive image of the authority he or she patterns him/herself on. As he or she learns about the world, a young person absorbs the information transmitted by the mass media, sometimes without confronting it with reality. Psychology underscores how significant in such situations is the role of important people and the authorities of people who can present their own perspective on perceiving the world (cf. Bardziejewska, 2005, pp. 365–367; Raczkowska, 1999, pp. 3–4). Who can become such an authority for a young person? Does a teacher have a chance?

Similarly to the Internet and television, magazines for young people can also exert a negative influence. They remove remarkable individualities from sight, promoting pseudo-authorities which frequently endorse denial of general human values. Mieczysław Łobocki stresses that “[...] depriving children and young people of real authorities condemns them to destructive influences and submission to their own weaknesses” (Łobocki, 2004, p. 130). Frequently, the lives of contemporary youths are dominated by authorities, whose demeanor is different, unusual, and sometimes shocking. They bring nothing into a young person’s life, other than an extravagant way of dressing and behaving. They do not communicate order, universal role-models, values and cultural achievements, for example those being of utmost importance in the construction of the blueprint of their identity (cf. Nowakowski, 2004, pp. 10–11). On the contrary, they frequently destroy and devastate the value system that has been instilled in a young person by, for instance, the family.

Kwiatkowska indicates that the source of the teacher’s authority constituted through the cognitive functions of the school is becoming exhausted (cf. Kwiatkowska, 2008, p. 146).

According to Witkowski “the barrier for the teacher’s authority is set by — against the variety of educational sources of the contemporary media, including the Internet — the crisis of the authority of schools as a source of knowledge and a place of beneficial learning which prepares for living and participating in the society and culture” (Witkowski, 2009, p. 351). This seems to be the main factor that weakens the authority of the teacher. Easy access to quick and attractive for a young person sources of knowledge, as well as deficiencies in the general knowledge of a teacher, which result from negative selection for the profession, or rather, an absence of such selection, “pushes” the teacher into the background in the process of the student’s search for knowledge. Searching for knowledge, the student hardly ever expects it from the teacher, as they have access to reliable, in a certain sense infallible source, that is, the Internet.

The mass media present real situations, frequently extreme, sometimes perhaps exaggerated, yet decreasing the authority of a contemporary teacher.

They create a caricature image of a contemporary teacher in the mind of the society. However, they stimulate reflection and looking for answers to questions: Is this possible...? Why...? The TV screen, the press, radio depict the lack of respect for the teacher, particularly at the middle and secondary level. Furthermore, apart from shows and movies, television broadcasts and even cartoons which ridicule teachers. It is thus very early on that children are exposed to negative social attitudes towards the teacher and his or her professional work. The lack of respect towards teachers is not only demonstrated by students, but also by parents, fed on the information from the mass media, and, unfortunately, from their own educational experience. All of this creates a negative social image of the teacher and leads to a gradual downfall of his or her authority. What then is or will be his or her influence on the personality of a pupil in search of his or her own way of life, frequently in search of their own self? Does the teacher still have a chance to "become" an authority for a young person in the contemporary world?

The mass media, in particular youth magazines influence young people in a very powerful way, creating their world of values. This is why persons who are an authority should also possess the ability to promote themselves in the contemporary world, so as not to be obscured by colorful pictures from the television screen and photographs assaulting them at every step. The authority should be a living example, a person who turns universal values into deeds, so that a young person would be inspired to imitate them (cf. Majewska-Opiełka, 2008, p. 6). Does a teacher have the possibility of doing that? Does he or she have the necessary competence? These are probably very high requirements, difficult to meet, since it is rather infrequently that such competences are shaped in prospective teachers. The teachers are not taught self-presentation skills. Not every candidate for the profession or qualified teachers possess the prerequisites for promoting themselves. This could be a barrier for the professional authority of teachers, as well as a new challenge in educating future teachers.

The civilizational changes have led to the situation where performing the teacher's profession requires not only a comprehensive education but also the constant broadening of one's knowledge and the development of one's professional competence. The professional development of a teacher will never be finished, his or her professional activity is constantly sustained (see Koczor-Zurek, 2006b, pp. 13, 31) — these are statements frequently encountered in pedeutological literature. Educational changes lead to increased requirements for the profession of a teacher. Yet, we observe negative selection for that profession. It is the high school graduates who do not distinguish themselves in any discipline or do not have any particular learning achievements that study in teacher university courses. The teacher's profession is becoming less and less attractive for a young person, not only in Poland.

It seems that the main factor responsible for this state of affairs is a low social prestige of the teacher's profession, which lowers its authority. At the moment, almost anyone can become a teacher in Poland, at least when it comes to acquiring the necessary qualifications. This is made possible by many colleges, not only state, but most of all, private ones. Thus, acquiring the qualifications is not a problem, matters are much worse when it comes to professional competence and, later, the possibility of employment. The educated "pseudo-teachers" assume their teaching posts by the way of backing or "luck" and help to shape a frequently caricature image of the teacher's professional work. The low social opinion decreases the professional authority of the teacher. The negative attitude of the society, the parents and the young people are also barriers which make becoming an authority for youth difficult. Only outstanding individuals can overcome those barriers. And here, once again, we arrive at the starting point for the change of the image of a contemporary teacher. What should be done to make this profession more attractive for a young person? What should be done for this profession to be chosen by people for whom teaching and educating is a value?

The factor which is independent of the person of the teacher yet lowers his or her authority is certainly the low social status of this profession. It is created by, among others, the mass media. The teacher's work is not appreciated or respected in the society, despite the fact that this job is characterized by a high level of difficulty and responsibility; as such it deserves to be called a profession (cf. Niemiec, 1997, pp. 11–19). It is a job with increasing demands and social expectations, one that requires constant professional development, and the constant broadening of one's competencies. These are factors that increase stress (Gaś, p. 26) and the possibility of the "burnout syndrome" (Koczoń-Zurek, 2005, p. 252; 2008a, p. 31). The occurrence of the burnout syndrome is a barrier against "becoming" an authority. In any case, such a teacher will no longer feel the necessity to be that.

The teacher's job is frequently undertaken by people without the necessary predispositions, which makes acquiring the necessary competencies and working according to pedagogical standards difficult. The result of the inability to cope with stress is not only the lack of the need for professional development, "becoming" the authority, but, above all, the incorrect work with the pupil, or in the case of burnout, even his or her depersonalization (Koczoń-Zurek, 2005, p. 253). Other negative behavior of the teacher resulting from stress may include: the acceptance of bad behavior of the pupils, demonstration of strength and power over the pupils, and adopting young people's lifestyle and behavior. Stress may also result in avoiding contacts with pupils and their parents and avoiding troublesome, difficult situations. One should also mention rejection or avoidance of students' creative activities in favor of routine work, or, to the contrary, stimulating activities which

lack a clear purpose. One can also frequently observe activities resembling moralizing lectures. All these behaviors constitute a protective shield against stress-inducing situations. Stress factors of an extended character may lead to an accumulation of negative emotional states and eventually lead to harmful psycho-somatic behavior and changes. This can be connected to professional burnout. Such situations and the behavior that they amplify influence the teacher's image as a pedagogue and an authority in a very negative way (Gaś, 2001, pp. 24–31). It seems that it is necessary for the teacher to possess competences in dealing with professional burnout and teachers should be prepared to handle such situations (Koczoń-Zurek, 2008a, pp. 32–36). Thus, it is necessary to teach another skill — stress reduction and preventing burnout through the use of appropriate strategies. Stress destroys the internal and the external image of a teacher.

However, the source of the direct social assessment of the teacher is the school itself. Let us also take a look at the factors present at school, which shape the teacher's authority. It seems that the most general factor is the change in the rights of teachers and pupils, an evaluation of the methods and the principles of teaching and educating. Łobocki underlines that "generally it is difficult to foresee which teachers may unconditionally count on being regarded as absolute authorities by the pupils [...] the most likely candidates are teachers who meet their expectations" (Łobocki, 2007, p. 131). This is obvious. It seems, however, that the youths' expectations of their teachers may sometimes (in pathological environments, for instance) stand in opposition to pedagogical principles. It is not always that the teacher can meet his or her student's expectations.

The contemporary world holds many dangers for the possibility of "becoming" an authority for pupils. Teachers are generally aware of the ones residing in the social environment. A factor less evidently connected with the didactic-formative process, one that can strengthen or impede the process of becoming an authority, seems to be the so-called hidden program. This involves various factors, which influence the teacher and the students, but remain unnoticed by the unaware teacher. The behavior of a teacher towards students may be conditioned by experiences hidden in his or her unconscious, stereotypes, or other external factors, for example the architecture of the school building or the furnishing of the room. Frequently, teachers yielding to their own subjective experience or external factors categorize children into better, more talented and worse, achieving less. In effect, children submit to this subjective selection and assume a corresponding attitude assigned to them by the teacher. Stereotypes rooted in the teachers' minds inflict a lot of damage on the didactic-formative process, as well as on the pupils themselves. They lead to a stereotyping selection of students, which does not always correspond to reality. It is a dangerous process. Children are often aware of

what is, in their opinion regarded as “unfair” treatment by the teacher. Every teacher should avoid stereotypes and categorizing students before immediate and personal contact with the pupil. Such a process leads to a decrease in the student’s self-esteem, his or her motivation and academic achievements. The awareness of the hidden program should prevent the teacher from yielding to it. Unfair treatment on the part of the teacher, resulting from the hidden program could be a threat to the shaping of his authority (cf. Meighan, 1993, pp. 71, 145–154). One can see the necessity of creating another psychological competence in the teacher — the ability to recognize the hidden program and to counteract the possibility of the subjective assessment of a pupil, to appropriately perceive the pupil and communicate adequately.

It seems that “becoming” an authority for a pupil is helped by the emotions that the teacher induces. Observation shows that teachers can induce various kinds of emotional responses: positive (joy, enthusiasm, eagerness to learn) and, unfortunately, negative, for instance aggression, anger, unwillingness to work. This indicates that teachers do not follow the elementary rules of formative education. Unfortunately, there are frequently more negative emotions than positive ones. It may also happen that the same teacher induces different kinds of emotions, because he or she is unable to individualize the formative or the teaching process, and as such, does not obey the fundamental pedagogical principle. Thus, the teacher should be able to recognize his or her own emotions, control them, and present his or her emotional side in a way that would motivate his students to work. This is another skill that should not only allow for a more effective performance, but for a “proper” one as well. Certainly a teacher who can induce positive emotions has a chance of becoming an authority. The ability to control emotions is also a skill that protects the teacher from professional burnout.

There exist many negative factors that destroy the positive image of a teacher. Yet, it is the teacher him/herself who should develop the will to survive and master the appropriate skills and abilities which can help him or her achieve respect in the eyes of their students and society. This can be regarded as yet another competence — that of self-presentation and counteracting the negative social image of the teacher’s profession, or even that of “creating the authority.” This requires various activities at many levels. It can be regarded as another challenge for the contemporary teacher.

Every person follows different values in life. Unfortunately, more and more frequently the contemporary school is saturated by pathological values. Violence and aggression, not only of the verbal kind, are expressions of this fact. These values are shaped by various authorities, frequently from the world of media, but also sometimes from the family and peer environment. It is difficult to be an authority while promoting general human values — goodness, friendship, tolerance, patriotism, etc., to young people who pos-

sess a different values system, or to young people who do not believe in such values. This is also another source of the crisis of schools' authority and a challenge for the teacher.

Teachers should be made aware that "students are ready to show respect, to respect the authority, but they do so only under certain conditions. They will acknowledge authority when the teacher is well familiar with his or her subject, is well prepared, can explain well, understands students not only in the social sense but can constructively lead the class, does not become unbalanced easily, has his or her own opinion and can defend it, even though he or she does not regard it as the only correct stance" (cf. Witkowski, 2007, p. 245). Witkowski stresses that students need "professionalism" more than they need trust. It also encompasses the methodological and psychological skills of the teacher. One can assume that this constitutes the main barrier for the teacher's authority. The author also points to Sigmund Freud's idea — "more important for students than what the teachers teach is what kind of people they are" (cf. Witkowski, p. 349). Apart from the lack of "professionalism," the teacher's personal predispositions, inadequate for the job, seem to be another barrier important for pedagogical consideration. The development of the aforementioned competency, described as "creating authority" must be preceded by the overcoming of the "lack of professionalism" and changes in the personal image of the teacher. Is that possible?

The teacher should be aware — as Kwiatkowska rightly indicates — that "he or she loses social authority in favor of a personal one" (2008, p. 148). In the contemporary world the only possible authority is the one "emerging from inner values of a person, from this person's constructive strength of development" (p. 147). The teacher can strengthen his or her authority only through his or her personality and competence. Yet frequently, the teacher's work is concentrated only on the didactic aspect. The teacher forgets about the existential needs of the student, who frequently expects support, understanding and talking to a teacher, who may not have time for that. These are the deficient goods of the contemporary school (p. 148). In the course of his or her studies, the contemporary teacher does not — as has already been demonstrated — acquire the psychological knowledge and skills necessary for the diagnosis of, for instance, the students' needs, their abilities. This barrier seems possible to be overcome in the process of the change in educating future teachers.

The above analyses allow for a statement that a teacher cannot always become an authority. The barriers are frequently constituted by his or her personality predisposition, or rather, their lack which originates in the process of selection, education, and employment of the teacher, the overseeing of his or her work and the pedagogical helplessness in the event of noticed irregularities. On the other hand, the barriers are also the values of a part

of contemporary youth, and are rooted in the family environment. This environmental barrier frequently remains unbreakable by the teachers, particularly those of "dubious" professional competence. The problem of the improvement of teacher's authority, that is, the search for the possibility of its strengthening, requires a separate reflection. The indicated barriers, external threats independent of the teacher, as well as the internal ones, nevertheless suggest certain solutions, a majority of which are impossible to be immediately implemented. They have not been exhausted. Their presentation demonstrates that the change of the teacher's image is a process, which requires a number of political, social, and educational changes. The teacher's authority may be regarded as a certain value that has been lost in the labyrinth of the contemporary world. On the other hand, in the contemporary world authority itself seems to be a kind of a labyrinth, where one can get lost, a labyrinth which sometimes does not have an exit. The awareness of the "loss" may be the beginning of changes, the beginning of the rebuilding of the authority of the teacher in the eyes of the student and society. It seems, however, that not every teacher will find the necessity and motivation for change, for creating a positive external image. An important determinant for those changes seems to be a positive self-presentation, high self-esteem, self-acceptance and the resultant awareness of one's value, also in the sphere of professional relationships. This, in turn, is conditioned by professional successes, perceived through the lens of the teacher's individual needs and values.

Let us remain within the sphere of theory, which can explain, stimulate reflection, suggest and help find solutions in the labyrinths of education. Such theory may perhaps encourage teachers to self-reflection, suggest sources for self-improvement, induce the awareness of the difficulty of pedagogical work and inspire the search for solutions in rebuilding one's authority. Pedagogy may seek help in restoring the teacher's lost authority in the process of educating the future pedagogical staff, by providing it with both professional qualifications and competences. This process must, however, be preceded by a selection of candidates with true humanist values and needs. Let us remember that the contemporary school still needs "an authority which emerges from the inner values of a person, from his or her constructive strength of development" (p. 147).

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Sabina Koczoń-Zurek

Obstacles dans la recherche de l'autorité de l'enseignant

Résumé

L'article constitue une tentative de chercher et de définir les menaces pour l'autorité de l'enseignant. L'enseignant, peut-il être une figure d'autorité pour les jeunes ? Qu'est-ce qui affaiblit l'image de l'enseignant contemporain ? On a présenté une quantité de terrains où il existe des menaces pour l'autorité de l'enseignant qui, plus ou moins, dépendent de lui-même. On a souligné qu'un obstacle pour l'autorité de l'enseignant peuvent constituer justement les prédispositions liées à sa personnalité et, plus exactement, leur absence qui aurait dû être détectée pendant le procédé de sélection, de formation et d'embauchage d'un enseignant, ainsi que pendant le contrôle de son travail ; à cela s'ajoute l'impuissance pédagogique dans les situations où ont été repérées certaines irrégularités dans son travail. On a constaté que les obstacles relatifs à l'environnement sont infranchissables pour certains enseignants, surtout pour ceux dont les compétences professionnelles sont « douteuses ». L'article montre que la prise de conscience de « la perte » de son autorité peut être un début de changements, une occasion pour lui de reconstituer son autorité aux yeux de ses élèves et de la société. On a souligné que le déterminant des changements de l'autorité de l'enseignant est bel et bien son autoprésentation positive, c'est-à-dire la confiance en lui, l'acceptation de lui-même et, ce qui s'ensuit, une conscience générale de sa valeur manifestée aussi dans la sphère professionnelle. Ces éléments sont conditionnés par les succès professionnels perçus à travers le prisme des besoins individuels et des valeurs de l'enseignant.

Sabina Koczoń-Zurek

Bariery w poszukiwaniu autorytetu nauczyciela

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest próbą poszukiwania i określenia zagrożeń dla autorytetu nauczyciela. Czy nauczyciel może być autorytetem dla młodzieży? Co osłabia wizerunek współczesnego nauczyciela? Ukazano szereg obszarów, w których występują zagrożenia dla autorytetu nauczyciela, mniej lub bardziej zależnych od jego osoby. Podkreślono, iż barierą dla autorytetu nauczyciela mogą być jego predyspozycje osobowościowe, a właściwie ich brak mający swe źródła w procesie doboru, kształcenia i zatrudniania nauczyciela, kontroli jego pracy i bezradności pedagogicznej w przypadku zauważonych nieprawidłowości w pracy nauczyciela. Zwrócono uwagę, iż bariery środowiskowe pozostają niepokonane przez nauczycieli, zwłaszcza o „wątliwych” kompetencjach zawodowych. Artykuł wskazuje, iż samo uświadamianie „utruty” autorytetu może być początkiem zmian, początkiem odbudowywania autorytetu nauczyciela w oczach ucznia i społeczeństwa. Podkreślono, że determinantem zmian autorytetu nauczyciela jest jego pozytywna autoprezentacja — wysoka samoocena, samoakceptacja i wypływające z niej ogólne poczucie własnej wartości oraz takie poczucie w sferze zawodowej. To z kolei warunkują sukcesy zawodowe, postrzegane przez pryzmat indywidualnych potrzeb i wartości nauczyciela.